

Demography

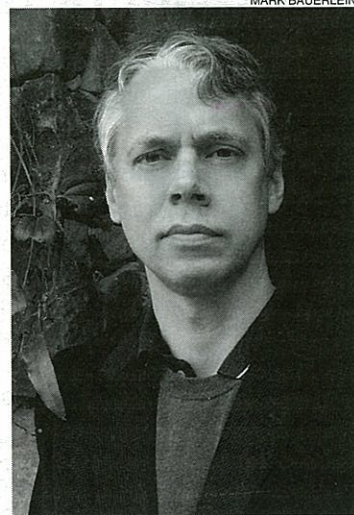
Hooked Up or Just Hooked

Teens spend four hours per day either watching television or online.

Nearly half of adolescent activities in the United States are driven by technology, according to the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA). Between watching TV and interfacing with the Internet, the average American teen spends four hours per day interfacing with some sort of device. The result, according to some, is that today's adolescent culture totally revolves around technology.

"Today's teens are significant con-

sumers of technology goods and content. Spending many activities and hours of the day devoted to technology, they are comfortable with its advancement and further placement in their lives.... As this generation continues to grow in their technology driven world, their desires for new and better products will continue to



Emory professor Mark Bauerlein.

grow and fuel the industry," the group concludes in their recent report, *Teens and Technology*.

Authors like Neil Howe (*Millennials Rising*, Vintage, 2000) and Don Tapscott (*Grown Up Digital*, McGraw-Hill, 2008) have documented and much praised the millennial and post-millennial generations' facility with technology, and teens' fondness for digital networking in particular. But not everyone is convinced that so much time on the Web is a good thing for young people.

"Go stand behind these kids when they're online, see how fast they plow through those pages. Listen to how fast they type. This acceleration of words and images builds a desire. The joy in networking is being supplanted by the constant need for stimulation," says Emory professor Mark Bauerlein, author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (Tarcher, 2008).

"When students leave my class," he says, "the first thing they do is check their e-mail and then they check Facebook. They don't have joy on their faces; they have concern. Did someone post something about me? Did I miss something? When they see everything is okay, there's relief. Not pleasure, just relief."

What many techno-enthusiasts and industry groups are missing, says Bauerlein, is that teens don't view network devices, or networks, as merely recreational. Cell phones and computers have become essential to the average American teenager's social life. Even the time spent away from gadgets—in the physical presence of other people—is increasingly dominated by discussion about what happened online or about pop-

ular culture as conveyed through digital media.

"These tools for teenagers and young people are more than communication devices; they are the primary means for relating to one another. You can see this when you watch a parent take away their child's cell phone. For the 15-year-old, this means exclusion. If I don't have this tool, they say, I can't connect, or text; I can't access my online profile page; I have no real place among my peers," says Bauerlein. "The private bedroom upstairs has become the focal point of social life for these kids. If you want to send them into exile, tell them go outside and play."

The CEA report provides evidence to support Bauerlein's observation. When asked, 80% of the teens surveyed said that going a day without technology made them feel "bored," "grumpy," "sad," and "uninformed." A week without technology is "severe punishment."

"Adults who didn't form our networks in youth through these tools don't recognize there's social formation taking place," Bauerlein notes. "The idea of social life being vibrant, active, dynamic, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all online: This is totally new."

Not only is the phenomenon new, it may actually be harmful to the goals of traditional education. Although 84% of teens in the CEA survey said that technology helps them with their school work, evidence suggests that certain types of online networking behavior harms academic performance. A 2007 report from the Irish State Examination Commission found that text messaging use among teenagers was having a highly negative effect on their writing and, thus, reading skills.

"Some of the things, the activities and the skills that help you succeed when you're 17, are the things that hurt you when you're 30," Bauerlein observes. —Patrick Tucker

Sources: *Teens and Technology* by the Consumer Electronics Association, 1919 S. Eads Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202. Telephone 703-907 7600, Web site www.ce.org.
Personal interview with Mark Bauerlein. □

Student Scholarships

Generous donors to the Society's **Student Scholarship Program** have helped boost the number of young people attending Society conferences and thus have helped strengthen the study of the future. You may also donate to this program! Contributions are tax-deductible. Just contact Susan Echard, vice president for membership/conference operations, at 800-989-8274 (or 301-656-8274) or by e-mail at sechard@wfs.org to donate.

We would like to acknowledge the following who have donated for 2009:

Robert Anderson	Kenneth Hunter	Ray Swassing
Thomas J. Burlingame	Paul B. Lorentzen	Stanley Tangelakis
James Calvin	Lynn Maddox	Nico Van Klaveren
Lynda Curtin	Gary Marx	Cynthia G. Wagner
Wendell Dreier Jr.	Pamela A. Paul-Shaheen	David Walter
Kathleen A. Eckerson	Elizabeth Rowland	
John J. Gottsman	Peter Sinclair	

Yes! I would like to support the World Future Society's Student Scholarship and other programs. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution.

___ Full Student Scholarships (\$125 each)

☐ Partial Scholarship: \$ _____

☐ President's Circle \$25,000 ☐ Founder \$10,000

☐ Patron \$5,000 ☐ Sponsor \$1,000

☐ Friend \$500 ☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Contributor \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP Code _____

Country _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Method of Payment:

My check is enclosed. (Make check payable to World Future Society.)

Please charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Am. Ex. ☐ Discover

Account # _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Mail to: World Future Society, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 450, Bethesda, Maryland 20814, U.S.A.

Teens, Tech, and Talk

Percentage of U.S. teens who agreed with the following:

	Overall	Age 12-14	15-17	Males	Females
I am comfortable using technology	92%	91%	93%	91%	93%
Technology makes my life easier	87%	86%	87%	87%	86%
Technology helps me with school work/to learn	83%	80%	85%	80%	85%
I can't afford the technologies I really want	41%	38%	44%	45%	37%
My parents restrict my technology usage	23%	28%	17%	25%	21%
Technology often frustrates me	13%	13%	14%	14%	13%
Technology helps me socialize or communicate with my friends	77%	73%	81%	73%	81%
Technology helps me socialize or communicate with family	53%	52%	54%	48%	59%
I want to have and use the same technologies as my friends	52%	56%	47%	55%	48%
Technology reduces the amount of time I spend with other people	25%	25%	25%	26%	24%
I have experienced peer pressure to have and use the latest technologies	25%	25%	24%	28%	21%

Source: The Consumer Electronics Association.